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RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 0003  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0183  
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA 0005  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5150  
RHMFIASS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 002355

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SUBJECT: ROK COUNTER-PIRACY RECOMMENDATIONS AND PLANS

REF: SECSTATE 126055

Classified By: Joseph Y. Yun for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. ROK officials describe their approach to counter piracy in the Horn of Africa as having three elements: international cooperation and coordination, preferably under the UN; capacity building for local maritime security forces; and joint military efforts. Nevertheless, budget concerns are driving the scope of the ROKG's counter-piracy actions. The best case scenario is for a ROK naval vessel and anti-piracy program to materialize in the second quarter of 2009. End summary.

¶2. (C) Poloff met with Ahreum Cho, Counter-terror Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT), on December 8 regarding issues raised in reftel. After recounting the ROK's past sponsorship of various UN resolutions and contributions to the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) voluntary cooperation fund, Cho said that the ROKG is very concerned about piracy in the Horn of Africa. Cho noted that the ROKG believes that a three-part, counter-piracy approach is necessary.

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The UN should coordinate counter-piracy efforts  
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¶3. (C) The ROK supports the view that there must be international coordination and cooperation for any counter-piracy effort to be effective. The ROKG would like to see the anti-piracy coordination and cooperation under the auspices of the UN, in order to reflect the views and balance the interests of all the countries affected by piracy. Cho noted that if a core group of countries emerge from the UN process, that group should contain the countries that already sustained material losses from pirates, which would include the ROK. Cho conceded the potential for the UN to adopt ineffective and untimely measures against piracy in the region.

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Local maritime security forces need support  
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¶4. (C) The ROKG believes that additional capacity building for the local maritime security apparatus could be an

effective tool against pirates in the region. Capacity building involves efforts to support the local law enforcement authorities' capacity to identify and apprehend pirates before they set sail. The ROKG believes that this would be a more cost-effective way to use its anti-piracy funds. Cho mentioned that the ROK is considering a 2-year KOICA (Korea Overseas International Development Agency) capacity building program for Somalia, Djibouti, Yemen, Kenya, and Tanzania that would train their maritime security officers in a 2-week training program in Korea. If KOICA approves the project, it would begin by June 2009. Cho noted that the program might not furnish watercraft assets to these countries since documentation exists indicating that some of the pirates used vessels previously donated by France. Cho inquired if there were any existing USG capacity building programs, whether bi-laterally or within the IMO.

¶15. (U) In addition to capacity building abroad, Cho said that the ROKG is assessing how it could use its legal system against pirates the ROKG might interdict at sea.

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The ROK will eventually send a vessel  
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¶16. (C) Cho concluded by reiterating the ROKG's intention to send a naval vessel to participate in international counter-piracy efforts. Even though the ROKG is reviewing the final details of the proposal, Cho believed that the ROKG will eventually send a naval vessel of some sort to support the international anti-piracy efforts. (Note: Local media reported that the ROKG plans to send a 4,500 ton destroyer loaded with SM-2 Block IIIA missiles and other advanced weaponry. End note.)

¶17. (C) Separately, poloff met with Lieutenant Colonel Soon-woo Kwon, International Peace Division in the Ministry of National Defense (MND), on December 3. According to Kwon, the ROKG's concern over the \$31 million projected cost of the navy ship's deployment to the Horn of Africa is delaying the ship's dispatch. Kwon said that the Blue House, (the Executive Branch), asked MND for the details behind the cost projections, with the explicit understanding that the MND must bring the cost down. Kwon still expected the ROKG to ask for National Assembly approval in late January 2009, as required by the Constitution before any forces can be dispatched abroad, but he was uncertain if the ROKG would secure the Assembly's consent. In the event that the National Assembly endorsed the ship's deployment, Kwon believed it would be two months before the ship arrived at the Horn of Africa. Consequently, the ship would arrive in April 2009, at the earliest.

¶18. (C) Comment. The ROKG is clearly alarmed at the rise of piracy in the Horn of Africa, especially as a number of Korean vessels have been on the receiving end. However, given the current budget and economic environment, an early ROKG action is not likely.

STEPHEN